
**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
COLORADO RIVER BASIN REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT
MARCH 2005**

PG&E Topock Compressor Station Chromium Cleanup (Jose Cortez)

February groundwater monitoring detected Hexavalent Chromium (Cr⁺⁶) at 357 ppb in a newly installed monitoring well. The new well is on the same bench where (Cr⁺⁶) was detected December 2003 and January 2004 at monitoring well MW-34-80. The wells are approximately 70 feet from the Colorado River. In response to detection, DTSC has directed PG&E: to increase pumping to maximum capacity (about 90 gallons per minute); install a new extraction well (PE-1); and sample selected locations weekly (four groundwater monitoring wells and three River stations). Construction of Interim Measures 3 treatment plant and groundwater injection wells continues with commencement of operations expected in mid May 2005. Current studies for evaluation and selection of a final remedy are ongoing.

Basin Planning and Amendment Process (Ivory Reyburn)

The Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) is the master plan for water quality control in the Colorado River Basin Region and it provides direction for Regional Board activities and regulatory efforts. The Federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code require Regional Boards to form, adopt, and revise Basin Plans as needed.

A public hearing, called the Triennial Review, is held, at a minimum, every three years for the purpose of reviewing and updating Basin Plans. The Colorado River Basin Region is currently conducting the 2004 Triennial Review and a Draft Triennial Review List of issues for consideration for adoption is an item on the upcoming May Board Meeting Agenda. Triennial Review requirements notwithstanding, the Basin Plan can also be amended as need arises. Staff may be directed by the State Water Board or directed by the legislature to do so, as in the example of Cathedral City Cove. A draft amendment can also be prepared based on a Regional Board directive or based on private or public concerns.

The Basin Plan is amended successfully by completing the State Water Board amendment process, which generally takes a year to complete. Most of the staff time spent during the amendment process is used to create the necessary documents. Staff must: draft the amendment that will be incorporated into the Basin Plan; draft the resolution for the Board; and fulfill all California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) obligations including the CEQA Checklist and Discussion. A staff report is also prepared to: support the amendment with background and technical information about the project; pose possible alternatives to the project; explore mitigation measures; consider economic impacts; and if required, discuss anti-degradation actions. Additionally, the scientific basis of the amendment must be peer reviewed. Then, the Regional Board must conduct a public hearing to consider adoption of the amendment. After the public hearing, the Regional Board may adopt the amendment. The adopted amendment is subject to the approval of the State Water Resources Control Board and Office of Administrative Law, and if the amendment deals with surface waters of the nation, must also be approved by the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Update Regarding Basin Plan Amendment to Prohibit the Discharge of Waste from New and Existing Individual Disposal Systems on Parcels Less than One-Half Acre that Overlie the Mission Creek Aquifer or Desert Hot Springs Aquifer in Riverside County if a Sewer System is Available (Joan Stormo)

On March 30, 2004, the Regional Board adopted a Basin Plan Amendment (BPA) pursuant to CWC Section 13281, to prohibit, if a sewer system is available, the discharge of waste from individual disposal systems (septic tanks) on parcels less than one-half acre that overlie the Mission Creek or Desert Hot Springs Aquifers in Riverside County. For parcels one-half acre or greater, the maximum density of dwellings with septic tanks is two per acre.

The State Water Resources Control Board approved the BPA on November 17, 2004, and the Office of Administrative Law approved the BPA on January 21, 2005. This process was required for regulations adopted by the Regional Board to become effective and enforceable. Mission Springs Water District (MSWD) is the water and sewer purveyor for the City of Desert Hot Springs and neighboring communities. MSWD implementing the BPA by informing residents of the prohibition, installing sewer infrastructure, and providing time schedules for construction, so residents can connect to the sewer at the earliest possible time.

The local community is very supportive of the septic tank prohibition, due largely to MSWD efforts. Staff is assisting MSWD with outreach and education to encourage compliance and keep residents informed. Staff is assisting MSWD with the water quality improvement State grant process (e.g., Proposition 13), to ensure that MSWD proposals are competitive. MSWD has been awarded three Proposition 13 grants to date totaling four million dollars, which with Federal funds are financing sewer projects. Regional Board staff will take progressive enforcement action against residents that refuse to comply with the prohibition.

Update on Nonpoint Source Grants (Doug Wylie)

The State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Financial Assistance, and the nine Regional Boards, are responsible for managing water quality grants funded by the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319(h) program and State Propositions 13, 40 and 50 passed by the voters over the past several years. These grants provide local agencies and organizations funds to clean up nonpoint source pollution caused by a wide variety of sources including agricultural and urban sources, such as failing septic tanks. Since most point sources are effectively regulated by NPDES permits, nonpoint source pollution has become the primary source of water pollution in the country. The grants are awarded on an annual basis in a competition judged by a statewide panel made up of representatives from many different agencies.

The 319(h) Grant Program has been in place for over ten years. The primary purpose of 319(h) grants is to implement Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for impaired water bodies. For example, at the January meeting this Board adopted the Imperial Valley Drains Sediment TMDL, the fourth TMDL adopted by this Board since 2001. The Imperial County Farm Bureau has been awarded several 319(h) grants to create and maintain its Voluntary TMDL Compliance Program to enroll farmers in the regulatory program for the Sediment TMDLs. The Farm Bureau also provides on-farm consultations to suggest ways to improve irrigation practices that reduce or prevent erosion of sediment from fields. The Farm Bureau Program received the prestigious Governor's Environmental and Economic Award last year. Other 319(h) grants are used by local agencies, such as Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and UC-Cooperative Extension in El Centro, to demonstrate improved farming techniques and irrigation practices that lead to water quality improvements and pollution prevention.

Proposition 13 was passed by California voters in 2000. There were three phases of funding in 2001, 2002, and 2003. Ten grants that totaled over \$12 million were awarded in this region. Most of these grants went to agencies constructing sewer lines in existing residential areas to eliminate septic tank usage that has been shown to contaminate our groundwater resources. Other grants were awarded to the Salton Sea Authority and the Torres Martinez Indian Tribe to address water quality problems around the Salton Sea.

Proposition 40 was passed in 2002. The first grant awarded to a local agency in our region was recently given to IID to fund its water quality monitoring program mandated by the Sediment TMDLs. IID will receive about \$500,000 from this grant.

Proposition 50 was also passed in 2002. Several awards are pending for local agency applications submitted last November in the Agricultural Water Quality Grant Program. Another program under Proposition 50 is the Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program. The Water Boards and the Department of Water Resources jointly administer this program. About \$380 million is available in two cycles for this funding with a maximum grant amount per project of \$50 million. The program objectives are:

- Protect communities from drought
- Protect and improve water quality
- Reduce dependence on imported water
- Promote integrated regional planning
- Achieve multiple benefits and objectives

Meetings attended by the Executive Officer

February 16, 2005, Holtville

California Border Environmental Enforcement Task Force, hosted by CalEPA and San Diego District Attorney's Office.

February 22, 2005, Cathedral City

Discussion with Cathedral City staff concerning Cove sewerage, hosted by Mayor Pro Tem.

March 1, 2005, San Diego

San Diego Environmental Crimes Task force hosted by San Diego District Attorney's Office.

March 9, 2005, La Quinta

Salton Sea Ecosystem Restoration Program public meeting hosted by the Department of Water Resources.